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SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES LEGAL COMMITTEE TO PUSH
ELECTORAL COMMISSION LEGISLATION

REF: BAGHDAD 2460

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret M. Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Saleem Al-Jaboori (Tawafuq), Vice Chair of the Council of Representatives (CoR) Legal Affairs Committee, told PolOffs July 12 that his committee would push hard for the passage of a bill that would replace the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) with the "High Commission for Elections" before the CoR recesses on August 1 (reftel). This would require that the draft law be read on the floor of the CoR for the first time no later than July 24 (due to a six-day period necessary to complete three readings and a final vote). Jaboori told PolOffs that the committee was conscious of the need to act quickly to end the political deadlock and stem the public exchange of accusations of improprieties between the current commissioners and the chief electoral officer (CEO). Failure to pass the new law quickly, said Jaboori, would make these problems worse. If the proposed timeline proved impossible to follow, Jaboori said the Legal Committee will recommend the IECI be extended a second time upon the expiration of its current mandate in August.

12. (C) According to Jaboori, the law to establish a permanent electoral commission will be created by combining elements of proposals from the IECI Board of Commissioners, the CEO, and Tawafuq. Jaboori said the significant differences between the competing drafts focus on how new commissioners would be selected and replaced and the relationship between them and the electoral administration.

13. (C) Jaboori said that the Legal Committee is leaning toward working from the draft submitted by the IECI Board of Commissioners, which would give the new commissioners broad authority over the CEO. This version would keep the current nine-commissioner structure intact. When asked how the new commissioners would be selected, Jaboori said one proposal would be to allow one commissioner to be nominated by each of the six major political blocs. The three remaining commissioner slots would be reserved for a minority appointment, a UN Representative and the CEO -- all as nonvoting commissioners.

14. (C) COMMENT: The Legal Committee will be hard pressed to get a law to the CoR floor by July 24, and even if it can, the floor debate may take longer than six days for such a politically significant bill. The Legal Committee has formally asked UNAMI for assistance in developing the draft law. UNAMI staff advise they believe the draft law needs significant revision to ensure the new commission's independence and transparency. They plan to meet with Legal Committee drafters in the coming days.
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